[P. 375, B]

RITUAL ACTIVITIES

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A pregnant woman was not permitted to eat eggs with double yolks, or double fruit, lest she have twins. No special action was taken if twins were born, however.

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During her confinement a woman was not supposed to rub the sweat from her face. She might dab the sweat off, but to rub it would cause her to be wrinkled in her old age. One informant assured me that this was the truth and pointed to her own relatively unwrinkled face as proof.

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When a child loses a milk teeth, it is taken up and thrown into the brush. At that time an admonition is shouted to "some little animal with sharp teeth," that it should exchange the milk tooth for a good permanent one (2298a-2301)

PUBERTY: GIRLS
(2305-2342)

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Aside from the "big times" which will be described later, the girls' puberty dance was the most important ceremonial gathering among the Washo. This custom had survived with tenacity and it is still considered a matter of real concern if for some reason a girl does not have "her dance."

Although much of the activity at a girls' dance is clearly social throughout the occasion, there is a series of ritual actions which must be carried out. The following account is an idealized version of the "old way." Other accounts will describe variations which have developed in the past years.

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Certain statements which I make will appear to be at variance with Stewart's Culture Element Distribution Lists. However, I am inclined to think that the absence of traits in the memory of my own informants represents a pattern of change rather than inaccuracies on the part of earlier investigators. With minor exceptions, differences between statements made today and Stewart's lists take the form of traits marked present in the lists which are unknown to my own informants. Moreover, most of these differences are to be found in the hair-combing and scratching complex and suggest that the taboos on hair combing were abandoned some time between the childhood of his informants, who were in their seventies in 1936, and that of my own informants, who are in their seventies today (1959).

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The parents of my informants must not have known or not enforced combing taboos, while the parents of Stewart's informants must have considered them proper and so instructed their children. We can speculate, on this basis, that the taboo on hair combing and scratching was abandoned by the Washo some time in the first half of the century. Whether this can be credited to the influence of the white man or to a continuing pattern of change is a matter for further investigation.

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The account of the entire puberty complex which follows was given to me by a seventy-five-year-old Washo woman who is generally consulted whenever a family plans to hold the girls' dance.

> "When a girl is about ten she is told what is going to happen to her. When her first period comes [she is not specially confined] people tell her to be

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A month after the birth the ceremony the Washo call in English the "baby feast" was held. In Washo the ceremony is called gumgáwi? or gumgá?au and means haircut. The mother bathed herself and the baby and both had their hair cut. Hank Pete says that another woman bathed the mother by washing her with sagebrush leaves dipped in water. The woman stroked the mother from her head down the front of her body to her toes and from the top of her head across her shoulders and down her arms. The hair cut from the baby's head was wrapped in buckskin and tied to the hood of his first cradle basket. Until the haircut the baby was kept in a winnowing basket, but afterwards he was kept on a series of cradle baskets. Next, a female relative of the mother took a winnowing basket (modal) and placed in it small handfuls of all kinds of food. A bow and arrow or an eagle feather or anything else could be placed on the basket with the food. The mother took a bit of each food, chewed it with sagebrush and spit it out. Then the contents of the basket were given away, chiefly to old people. After this ceremony the mother could again eat meat, grease and salt, and the husband and wife could have sexual intercourse.

According to our informants, the modern Washo observe a birth ceremony although many of the customs surrounding birth have been abandoned. The men especially seem to have given up their traditional practices; as a result, the ceremony when the umbilical cord falls off is no longer observed. The women still observe the food taboos, unless they have been forced to eat meat at the government hospital. If the food restrictions have been followed, the women undergo the ceremony of chewing food with sagebrush and spitting it out at the end of the period of restriction. Bathing, hair cutting and the distribution of presents have also been retained. The latter practice seems more important in the modern ceremony than it was in the aboriginal one. The modern baby feast follows the birth by two weeks rather than a month.

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(431)

Girl's Puberty Dance

The girl's puberty dance (ʔe?wé we?) was celebrated at her first menses. From the time a girl first menstruated, she did not eat for four days although she might take warm water or tea made from boiling sagebrush or sugar pine leaves in water. The fast made her live longer and kept her from getting hungry later in life; if she ate she would not grow properly and would die young (Lowie, 1939, 306). During the four days of her fast, said the Washo, the girl was "shaping her life." She should work hard so as not to be lazy in the future. The girl tried to stay awake at night, kept busy with household tasks, and gathered berries and nuts. Anyone could take what she had gathered. Stewart (1941, 410) says she used a scratching stick for a month

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527 A feast terminated the period (one or two months) during which the
[431] mother was not permitted to eat meat. Gifts were given away and it was par-
[603] ticularly important for the grandparents to be present, the food being passed
[852] to them first. The mother at this feast ate meat again and a little ritual was performed for the baby.

854 The baby was often rubbed with soft sagebrush, which after use was
302 thrown eastward. If it was a girl her forehead and cheeks were painted with red ocher. If it was a boy his nose and chin were painted with a white pigment (dí²ek).

352 The first cradle was used on the day of birth and a new cradle was
854 used after each bath during the mother's confinement. These temporary cradles are quite different from the permanent cradles in having an oval back, woven sides at the head end, and no hood in front or crossbars on the back. The temporary cradles are not used today and are rarely seen.

The baby was placed in its first permanent basketry cradle at the end of the mother's confinement, and new larger cradles were used as the child
[751] grew. Up to five cradles may have been used before the child began to walk. The hood or sunshade (maŋyó·dop) of the cradle had pendants of shell or beads suspended from the front "to prevent the child from becoming cross-eyed."
[531] Hank Pete said that the baby's umbilical cord was tied to the front of the hood for this purpose. The hood still carries a design of parallel diagonal lines for a boy and a continuous zigzag or diamond chain design for a girl.

854 A sagebrush bark pad was placed in the cradle and the infant, wrapped in a small rabbitskin robe, was placed over this and lashed to the cradle with buckskin. A buckskin strap was attached to the back of the cradle and passed over the forehead of the woman who carried it.

843 If a miscarriage occurred the fetus was disposed of in the same manner as the placenta and umbilical cord and the same beliefs attended this act.
[754] One woman was careless enough to allow her mother-in-law, who was angry with her, to see the disposal of the fetus. It was believed that the mother-in-law had either destroyed it or turned it over and buried it in another place, because this woman never had another child and was in poor health after the miscarriage.

845 A stillborn baby was buried in warmed ground and the baby basket
847 was placed in the crotch of a tree, or merely thrown away. Abortion was effected by applying pressure to the abdomen. The men are said to have objected to this.

5 Susie Dick made one of these cradles for Grace Dangberg.